



Spring Cleaning For Your Mind

In April and May, people often take advantage of the warmer weather and longer days to spring clean. They throw out old things and give their homes a top-to-bottom cleaning. If you find yourself in the mood for a spring cleaning but don't know how or where to start, keep these tips in mind.

Purge: Get rid of items you have not used for more than a year or things that are broken. Chances are you will not miss them. If you are having trouble deciding what you should keep and what you should throw away, ask yourself these questions:

- When was the last time I used this?
- When will I use this again?
- Does this item have so much sentimental value that I cannot possibly live without it?
- Is this item out-of-date/expired/not useful any longer?

Sorting Bins: Many home organization experts promote a process commonly called the "Four Box" method. It involves using four boxes to categorize items. Each box has a different label:

- **Box 1 – Put It Away:** Place any items that should be put back in their appropriate place in this box. Is there a screwdriver on your coffee table? Put it into this box and then put it back where it belongs.
- **Box 2 – Sell or Give Away:** Put items in this box that are no longer of use to you but that could be useful or have value to somebody else. Do you have old bar stool-style chairs in your basement that could be sold at a garage sale? Items like these fall into the Sell or Give Away category.
- **Box 3 – Storage:** Put things that you need to keep but that do not have to be kept out in this box. These items can include important papers, mementos with sentimental value, photographs or decorations. Find a place to store them.
- **Box 4 – Throw Away:** Box number four is not really a box; it is a garbage can. Throw anything that you have not used in a long time, that you do not think you will use in the foreseeable future, and that has no actual or sentimental value.

Clean the Walls: The walls are often overlooked in yearly spring cleaning. Start with a damp cloth and wipe away any dirt or dust. If more stubborn stains remain, dilute a small amount of dishwashing soap in a bucket of water and use the solution to gently scrub away the stain.

Wash the Blinds: Similar to walls, blinds are often forgotten in the cleaning routine. Wide, slatted blades can be wiped down with a gentle cleaner. Aluminum blinds should be taken outside and scrubbed with warm water and a gentle soap.

Filing System: Invest in a filing cabinet. One afternoon spent organizing a filing cabinet will pay off in the long run. Sort paperwork by document type and make a folder for each category. Folder examples include taxes, loans and receipts.

Finally. Check each room in the house, including the attic and basement. Also be sure to check the garage, yard and storage shed. Examine, clear and repair:

- Frayed or damaged appliance cords, wiring, fuses or breakers
- Trash or yard debris
- Stacks of paper and magazines that can be recycled.

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